

ADDRESS AT THE GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY ALUMNI BANQUET,
STATE NORMAL AND INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE, AT ELLENDALE, N.D. OCT. 22, 1949

A young man trying to get ahead finds that the saving of his first five hundred dollars is the hardest. The first five years of the life of this college may have been the hardest. I know, at least, that they were happy years, even though they may have been hard ones.

The opposition to the starting of this school was aggressive. It asserted that there were schools enough. It doubted the objectives that were being advocated for the new school.

But when the time came to lay the cornerstone of the first building, there came over the community a great spirit of unity. The Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of North Dakota had charge of the ceremonies. I recall that I was very busy gathering the records of all the organizations in the county. Lists of many officers, church and lodge membership, were prepared. A great bundle of information is inside that stone that will surprise a future generation when it is opened. The able State senator, Tom Marshall, of Oakes, gave the dedication address that was a masterpiece - one of his best efforts. It was a gala day with grand weather. The large crowd marched away from the scene with the zest that fans feel when the home team wins.

When the attendance at the school went to over a hundred, I was reminded of the mother-in-law who said to her son-in-law, when the first born in the family was triplets: "Now, sir, your troubles have just begun." We had three times as many students as we had expected.

Our State senator, who had been active in securing the money for the first building, had now become our United States Congressman at Washington. Quite privately I wrote many letters to him, telling about the conditions and progress of the school. I suggested that I thought it would be possible to get Mr. Carnegie interested. The replies of the Congressman gave no encouragement other than to say he would do his best. It was many weeks later when a telegram came saying funds were available. It took our citizens by surprise and some doubted that the telegram was reliable. It was a surprise to me, too, but I knew that the telegram gave a true statement.

We had to hurdle another fence. The trustees moved forward with the building plans over the protest of the Governor. And, after some delays, the building was opened. The addition of Carnegie Hall to the campus was a turning point in the growth of your school.

This college has had fine team work in its organization and administration for fifty years. Before '99, B. R. Crabtree of the trustees and I spent several days at Stout Institute at Menomonie, Wisconsin, to get a first-hand view of its buildings and equipment, and to learn about its courses of instruction. Over the years there have been changes in the President, in the Trustees, in the Faculty and the student body, and at the end of the period we read in the Golden Anniversary Bulletin that our college, and Stout, and the Colorado College, are the three outstanding colleges of the nation which grant degrees. We began to plant hybrid seed corn in the educational fields fifty years ago, and have improved the quality of the crop every year since.

Are small colleges handicapped? Whatever the arguments are on this question, the trend today is in favor of the small college. See what has happened to the enrollment in Wisconsin this fall. The enrollment at the University of Wisconsin has decreased while the enrollment at practically all of the small colleges of the state has increased.

Has the small college prestige? Recently I met casually the superintendent of schools of Algoma, Wisconsin, and I found that he had this college pegged as one of the best in the west. I note that its graduates, for ten years, have been placed well - all of them - a hundred percent record. Moreover, this college appears to be the first State institution of its kind. Your state constitution made provision for it. Credit for this good fortune goes to Atty. A. D. Flemington. To be first in a good undertaking is a distinction for which the whole population of North Dakota may be justly proud.

I am advised that in the fifty years there have been 2,085 graduates; of these 320 have received degrees. Add to that number the hundreds of students who have attended part time and you get a numerical view of the breadth of the influence of this college. And it is not a slave factory. On the contrary, the product of this factory - graduates and students - think clearly and act nobly.

Truly, this is a great institution. Glance over this assembly of graduates. I have been called upon for years to pass an opinion on all sorts of people. Where else have I seen a gathering that is so manifestly intelligent, alert and progressive. You may have equals, but none superior.

Now, as to the future. When you view the mess in which the world is wallowing, a prophet is not needed to see that we need greater courage to meet and solve the problems that are pending. You are the thought leaders of your communities. Some surveys have been made by great advertising companies as to the extent of the influence of a thought leader. These surveys show that, on the average, a leader influences about fifty other persons in his circle of acquaintances. Some thought leaders are found in all walks of life. If the average, per leader, is fifty persons, the number influenced by the graduate leader is way in excess of fifty. We are so early old, and so late smart, better that we think and act now. Let us be better leaders now.

Your leadership is the best hope in fighting for peace. Your training has given you individuality beyond your heritage of birth. You believe in work, performed happily and efficiently. The mass trend toward socialism, that has overwhelmed some of our nations, runs contrary to your convictions as a student and as a citizen. I am told that you have done your jobs well in the past. And you will in the future. As your college leads in its broad and fine services, so you may lead in your circle. And in doing so, may your cares drop from you like needles from off the lofty pines.

It has been a great privilege to be here for two days and to see the wonderful growth in our college and to share with you in the events of the homecoming. I thank you all for this rare enjoyment. It has been a visit that I shall always cherish.

Warren E. Hicks